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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**

**EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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*versus*

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CASE NO. 4:18-CR-184

JOHN RUSSELL SCRIVNER

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**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

Pending before the court is Defendant John Russell Scrivner’s (“Scrivner”) Motion for Compassionate Release (#66), wherein he requests that the court appoint counsel and release him from imprisonment pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) due to the threat of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”). The Government opposes the motion, and after conducting an investigation, United States Probation and Pretrial Services (“Probation”) recommends denying the motion. Having considered the motion, the Government’s response, Probation’s recommendation, the record, and the applicable law, the court is of the opinion that the motion should be denied.

I. Background

On November 15, 2018, a federal grand jury in the Eastern District of Texas returned a First Superseding Indictment (“Indictment”) charging Scrivner in Counts 1 through 10 with Wire Fraud, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343. On February 8, 2019, Scrivner pleaded guilty to Count 4 of the Indictment pursuant to a non-binding plea agreement. On August 1, 2019, the court sentenced Scrivner to 41 months’ imprisonment, followed by a 3-year term of supervised release. The court also imposed criminal monetary penalties, including restitution in the amount of \$341,981.06. Scrivner is currently housed at the Federal Correctional Institution Englewood, located in Littleton, Colorado (“FCI Englewood”). His projected release date is June 30, 2022.

II. Appointment of Counsel

Scrivner requests the appointment of counsel to assist him in presenting his motion for compassionate release under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c). There is no constitutional right to appointed counsel in post-conviction proceedings. *Pennsylvania v. Finley*, 481 U.S. 551, 555 (1987) (“The right to appointed counsel extends to the first appeal of right, and no further.”); *see Garza v. Idaho*, \_\_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_, 139 S. Ct. 738, 749 (2019); *McCleskey v. Zant*, 499 U.S. 467, 494-95 (1991); *Whitaker v. Collier*, 862 F.3d 490, 501 (5th Cir. 2017), *cert. denied*, 138 S. Ct. 1172 (2018); *In re Sepulvado*, 707 F.3d 550, 554 (5th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 571 U.S. 952 (2013).

The court, however, may, in the interest of justice, appoint counsel to assist a defendant in the pursuit of post-conviction relief where a defendant has raised nonfrivolous claims with factually and/or legally complex issues. *See United States v. Whitebird*, 55 F.3d 1007, 1011 (5th Cir. 1995) (“After [a defendant’s first appeal], the decision whether to appoint counsel rests in the discretion of the district court.”).

The exercise of discretion in this area is guided . . . by certain basic principles. When applying this standard and exercising its discretion in this field, the court should determine both whether the petition presents significant legal issues, and if the appointment of counsel will benefit the petitioner and the court in addressing this claim.

*United States v. Molina-Flores*, No. 3:16-CR-130-N (19), 2018 WL 10050316, at \*2 (N.D. Tex. Feb. 13, 2018) (quoting *Jackson v. Coleman*, No. 3:11-cv-1837, 2012 WL 4504485, at \*4 (M.D. Pa. Oct. 2, 2012)); *see Scoggins v. MacEachern*, No. 04-10814-PBS, 2010 WL 3169416, at \*1 (D. Mass. Aug. 10, 2010) (“In order to obtain appointed counsel, ‘an indigent litigant must demonstrate exceptional circumstances in his or her case to justify the appointment of counsel.’ The rare cases warranting appointment of counsel in the interests of justice typically involve

nonfrivolous claims with factually and/or legally complex issues and a petitioner who is severely hampered in his ability to investigate the facts.” (quoting *Cookish v. Cunningham*, 787 F.2d 1, 2 (1st Cir. 1986)).

Scrivner is not entitled to the appointment of counsel to assist him with seeking compassionate release under 18 U.S.C. § 3582. *See Finley*, 481 U.S. at 555; *United States v. Whitebird*, 55 F.3d 1007, 1010-11 (5th Cir. 1995) (declining to recognize constitutional or statutory right to assistance of counsel in bringing § 3582(c)(2) motion for sentence reduction); *United States v. Vasquez*, No. CR 2:18-1282-S-1, 2020 WL 3000709, at \*3 (S.D. Tex. June 2, 2020) (“There is no right to counsel in § 3582 or other post-appellate criminal proceedings.”). Moreover, Scrivner provides no basis for the court to conclude that the appointment of counsel would help him obtain relief. A motion “for compassionate release is not particularly complex factually or legally.” *United States v. Drayton*, No. 10-200018, 2020 WL 2572402, at \*1 (D. Kan. May 21, 2020); *see United States v. Wilfred*, No. 07-351, 2020 WL 4698993, at \*1 (E.D. La. Aug. 13, 2020). Scrivner is a United States citizen, who grew up in Columbine, Colorado, graduated from high school, and attended some college. The motion he has presented is typed, organized, and literate, with proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Furthermore, Scrivner had two retained counsel throughout his criminal proceedings and has made no effort to demonstrate a change in circumstances or show that he is indigent in order to be eligible for appointed counsel. In any event, Scrivner does not raise any viable claims or any factually or legally complex issues that could arguably justify the appointment of post-conviction counsel. Thus, the court finds that the discretionary appointment of counsel is not warranted. *See* 18

U.S.C. § 3006A(a)(2) (allowing appointment of counsel under certain circumstances when “the court determines that the interests of justice so require”).

III. Compassionate Release

On December 21, 2018, the President signed the First Step Act of 2018 into law. *See First Step Act of 2018*, Pub. L. No. 115-391, 132 Stat. 5194. The Act, in part, amended 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c), which gives the court discretion, in certain circumstances, to reduce a defendant’s term of imprisonment:

The court, upon motion of the Director of the Bureau of Prisons (“BOP”), or upon motion of the defendant after the defendant has fully exhausted all administrative rights to appeal a failure of the [BOP] to bring a motion on the defendant’s behalf or the lapse of 30 days from the receipt of such a request by the warden of the defendant’s facility, whichever is earlier, may reduce the term of imprisonment (and may impose a term of probation or supervised release with or without conditions that does not exceed the unserved portion of the original term of imprisonment), after considering the factors set forth in section 3553(a) to the extent that they are applicable, if it finds that extraordinary and compelling reasons warrant such a reduction; or the defendant is at least 70 years of age, has served at least 30 years in prison, pursuant to a sentence imposed under section 3559(c), for the offense or offenses for which the defendant is currently imprisoned, and a determination has been made by the Director of the [BOP] that the defendant is not a danger to the safety of any other person or the community, as provided under section 3142(g); and that such a reduction is consistent with applicable policy statements issued by the Sentencing Commission . . . .

18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A). This provision is commonly referred to as “compassionate release.”

Prior to the First Step Act, only the Director of the BOP could file a motion seeking compassionate release. *See United States v. Franco*, No. 20-60473, 2020 WL 5249369, at \*1 (5th Cir. Sept. 3, 2020) (“Prior to the passage of the First Step Act . . . courts lacked the power to adjudicate motions for compassionate release.”); *Tuozzo v. Shartle*, No. 13-4897, 2014 WL 806450, at \*2 (D.N.J. Feb. 27, 2014) (denying petitioner’s motion for compassionate release because no motion for his release was filed by the BOP). The First Step Act amended § 3582(c)

by providing a defendant the means to appeal the BOP’s decision not to file a motion for compassionate release on the defendant’s behalf. *United States v. Cantu*, 423 F. Supp. 3d 345, 347 (S.D. Tex. 2019); *United States v. Bell*, No. 3:93-CR-302-M, 2019 WL 1531859, at \*1 (N.D. Tex. Apr. 9, 2019). The plain language of the statute, however, makes it clear that the court may not grant a defendant’s motion for compassionate release unless the defendant has complied with the administrative exhaustion requirement. 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A); *Franco*, 2020 WL 5249369, at \*1 (holding that the statutory requirement that a defendant file a request with the BOP before filing a motion for compassionate release in federal court “is *not* jurisdictional but that it *is* mandatory”); *United States v. Alam*, 960 F.3d 831, 833 (6th Cir. 2020) (“Even though [the] exhaustion requirement does not implicate [the court’s] subject-matter jurisdiction, it remains a mandatory condition.”); *United States v. Raia*, 954 F.3d 594, 597 (3d Cir. 2020) (“[T]he exhaustion requirement . . . presents a glaring roadblock foreclosing compassionate release.”). Thus, before seeking relief from the court, a defendant must first submit a request to the warden of his facility to move for compassionate release on his behalf and then either exhaust his administrative remedies or wait for the lapse of 30 days after the warden received the request. 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A); *Franco*, 2020 WL 5249369, at \*1 (“The text . . . outlines two routes a defendant’s motion can follow to be properly before the court. Both routes begin with the defendant requesting that ‘the [BOP]’ ‘bring a motion on the defendant’s behalf.’”); *United States v. Harris*, 812 F. App’x 106, 107 (3d Cir. 2020); *United States v. Springer*, 820 F. App’x 788, 791 (10th Cir. 2020) (defendant “was required to request that the BOP file a compassionate-release motion on his behalf to initiate his administrative remedies” (citing *Raia*, 954 F.3d at 595)); *Alam*, 960 F.3d at 833-34; *United States v. Soliz*, No. 2:16-190-3,

2020 WL 2500127, at \*3 (S.D. Tex. May 14, 2020) (“§ 3582(c)(1)(A) does not provide this Court with the equitable authority to excuse [defendant’s] failure to exhaust his administrative remedies or to waive the 30-day waiting period.” (quoting *United States v. Reeves*, No. 18-00294, 2020 WL 1816496, at \*2 (W.D. La. Apr. 9, 2020))). Here, Scrivner submitted a request to the warden of his facility on May 20, 2020, which Warden Greilick denied on June 29, 2020. Although Scrivner complied with the exhaustion requirement before filing the instant motion, nothing in his motion indicates that extraordinary and compelling reasons exist to release him from confinement.

Congress did not define “extraordinary and compelling.” Rather, it elected to delegate its authority to the United States Sentencing Commission (“the Commission”). *See* 28 U.S.C. § 994(t) (“The Commission, in promulgating general policy statements regarding the sentencing modification provisions in section 3582(c)(1)(A) of title 18, shall describe what should be considered extraordinary and compelling reasons for sentence reduction, including the criteria to be applied and a list of specific examples.”); *see also* U.S. SENTENCING GUIDELINES MANUAL § 1B1.13 (U.S. SENTENCING COMM’N 2018) (“USSG”). In Application Note 1 to § 1B1.13 of the USSG, the Commission defined “extraordinary and compelling reasons” to include the following four categories of circumstances: (i) certain medical conditions of the defendant; (ii) the defendant is 65 years or older and meets other requirements; (iii) the defendant’s family has specified needs for a caregiver; and (iv) other reasons in the defendant’s case that establish an extraordinary and compelling reason. The court must also consider the factors set forth in 18

U.S.C. § 3553(a),<sup>1</sup> as applicable, and find that the sentence modification is consistent with the policy statements issued by the Commission. 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A). The policy statement regarding compassionate release requires a determination that “the defendant is not a danger to the safety of any other person or to the community.” U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13(2).

A. Medical Condition

In the instant motion, Scrivner contends that he is eligible for compassionate release due to his health, stating specifically that he suffers from the following chronic illnesses: “1) Hypertension, 2) Heart Murmur, [and] 3) Obesity weight over 235 pounds.” The USSG provides that extraordinary and compelling reasons exist regarding a defendant’s medical condition when the defendant is “suffering from a terminal illness (*i.e.*, a serious and advanced illness with an end of life trajectory)” or when a defendant is “suffering from a serious physical or medical condition,” “suffering from a serious functional or cognitive impairment,” or “experiencing deteriorating physical or mental health because of the aging process, that substantially diminishes the ability of the defendant to provide self-care within the environment of a correctional facility and from which he or she is not expected to recover.” U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13 cmt. n.1(A).

Here, Scrivner does not offer any medical records or other documentation in support of his claimed medical conditions. According to his Presentence Investigation Report (“PSR”),

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<sup>1</sup> Section 3553(a) directs courts to consider: the nature and circumstances of the offense and the defendant’s history and characteristics; the need to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to promote respect for the law, and to provide just punishment for the offense; the need to deter criminal conduct; the need to protect the public; the need to provide the defendant with needed educational or vocational training, medical care, or other correctional treatment in the most effective manner; the kinds of sentences and sentencing ranges established for defendants with similar characteristics under applicable USSG provisions and policy statements; any pertinent policy statement of the Commission in effect on the date of sentencing; the need to avoid unwarranted disparities among similar defendants; and the need to provide restitution to the victim. 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a).

prepared in May 2019, Scrivner informed Probation that he had back surgeries in 1977 and 2003 that caused him pain and limited his ability to stand for long periods of time. He also mentioned that he had surgery on his rotator cuff in 2010. Scrivner did not report any additional medical conditions or that he was taking any medications at the time of his interview. According to Scrivner's BOP medical records, provided by the Government, he has been diagnosed with impingement syndrome of the shoulder and low back pain for which he has been prescribed Ibuprofen and Sulindac for the pain. Scrivner has also been diagnosed with essential (primary) hypertension for which he has been prescribed Amlodipine to control his blood pressure. His medical records reflect that his blood pressure has improved with treatment, with the most recent reported reading of 130/81 on March 27, 2020. Although Scrivner claims to suffer from a heart murmur, his BOP medical records indicate that he does not have a heart murmur, according to examination reports dated August 29, 2019 ("murmurs: NO"); September 6, 2019 ("NO: M/R/G" [murmurs, rubs, or gallops]); and March 27, 2020 ("No: M/R/G").

When his PSR was prepared in May 2019, Scrivner was 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighed 275 pounds. According to BOP medical records, Scrivner weighed 265 pounds on September 6, 2019; however, as of the time of his last reported measurement on March 27, 2020, Scrivner weighed only 197 pounds. Although he claims to weigh 235 and have a Body Mass Index ("BMI") of 40, as of March 27, 2020, Scrivner had a BMI of 28.3, indicating he is overweight but not obese.

Probation's investigation revealed that Scrivner is classified as a Care Level 1 inmate. According to BOP's Clinical Practice Guidance, "Care Level 1 inmates are less than 70 years of age and are generally healthy," but "[t]hey may have limited medical needs that can be easily

managed by clinician evaluations every 6-12 months.” Further, BOP medical staff indicated that he “did not appear to have any conditions which put him at increased risk of [COVID-19] complications.” Even considering his hypertension, Scrivner’s medical summary does not meet the criteria listed above. None of these medical conditions is terminal or substantially diminishes his ability to provide self-care. In fact, BOP records disclose that Scrivner is housed in general population, has no medical restrictions, is assigned regular duty work, is cleared for food service, and that his most recent assignments are as camp orderly and in outside recycling. Thus, Scrivner has failed to establish that a qualifying medical condition exists that would constitute extraordinary and compelling reasons to reduce his sentence.

In addition, granting Scrivner compassionate release at this juncture would fail to provide just punishment for his offense and promote respect for the law. It is well settled that “compassionate release is discretionary, not mandatory,” and may be refused after weighing the sentencing factors in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a). *United States v. Chambliss*, 948 F.3d 691, 693 (5th Cir. 2020). In *Chambliss*, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit found that the district court did not abuse its discretion in denying compassionate release due to the defendant’s not yet having served a sufficient portion of his sentence. *Id.* at 694. The district court determined that the defendant’s terminal illness “constitut[ed] ‘an extraordinary and compelling reason for a sentence reduction’ and that he ‘[did] not present a danger upon release,’” but denied release because “releasing [the defendant] after serving only 14 years of a 30-year sentence minimizes both the impact of [the defendant’s] crime and seriousness of the offense.” *Id.* at 693-94. “Moreover, the [district] court, citing the § 3553(a) factors, determined that requiring [the defendant] to serve the remainder of his sentence would ‘provide just punishment for the offense’

and ‘afford adequate deterrence to criminal conduct.’” *Id.* In the instant case, releasing Scrivner after he has served only 40% of his sentence, as calculated by the Government, would similarly minimize the impact of his crime and the seriousness of his offense.

B. Age

Scrivner also asserts that the court should grant compassionate release because of his age.

The USSG provides that extraordinary and compelling reasons exist as to a defendant’s age when:

[t]he defendant (i) is at least 65 years old; (ii) is experiencing a serious deterioration in physical or mental health because of the aging process; and (iii) has served at least 10 years or 75 percent of his or her term of imprisonment, whichever is less.

U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13 cmt. n.1(B). Here, according to Scrivner’s PSR, he is 53 years of age, well below the minimal threshold of 65 years. There is no indication that he is experiencing serious deterioration in his physical or mental health. Moreover, as of the date of his motion, Scrivner had served 14 months of his 41-month sentence, far below than the lesser of 10 years or 75 percent of his term of imprisonment.

Alternatively, 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(ii) allows modification of a term of imprisonment for age-related reasons when:

the defendant is at least 70 years of age, has served at least 30 years in prison, pursuant to a sentence imposed under section 3559(c), for the offense or offenses for which the defendant is currently imprisoned, and a determination has been made by the Director of the Bureau of Prisons that the defendant is not a danger to the safety of any other person or the community as provided under section 3142(g); and that such a reduction is consistent with applicable policy statements issued by the Sentencing Commission.

18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(ii). As previously stated, Scrivner is only 53 years of age, which is less than the stated minimum age of 70. Moreover, Scrivner’s imposed sentence is pursuant to a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343 which is not deemed an 18 U.S.C. § 3559(c) offense. Hence,

Scrivner also does not meet the alternative requirements for age-related compassionate release stated in 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A)(ii).

C. Family Circumstances

Although the USSG acknowledges that extraordinary and compelling reasons may exist with respect to a defendant's family circumstances, it specifies the following qualifying conditions:

(i) “[t]he death or incapacitation of the caregiver of the defendant's minor child or minor children” or (ii) “[t]he incapacitation of the defendant's spouse or registered partner when the defendant would be the only available caregiver for the spouse or registered partner.” U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13 cmt. n.1(C)(i)-(ii). Here, Scrivner asserts that his “greatest desire is to be home with my Grand daughter and my wife who depend on me to take care of their daily needs.” He does not claim that his wife is incapacitated or is in need of a caregiver. Furthermore, care for his grandchild falls outside the scope of USSG § 1B1.13 cmt. n.1(C), which applies to minor children and registered partners. *United States v. Johnson*, No. 2:13-231, 2020 WL 3000500, at \*2 (S.D. Tex. June 2, 2020) (holding unless the elderly parent is the caregiver of defendant's own minor children, an elderly parent is not covered under USSG § 1B1.13); *United States v. Gonzales*, No. SA-05-CR-561-XR, 2019 WL 5102742, at \*3 (W.D. Tex. Oct. 10, 2019) (movant's desire to help his adult daughter and her mother and to become a caregiver for his elderly mother and mentally challenged sister do not present the type of “familial relations . . . covered by the Application Notes 1(C) or 1(D) to U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13.”). Therefore, Scrivner fails to meet the requirements for family circumstances that establish extraordinary and compelling reasons.

D. “Other” Reasons

Scrivner’s request for compassionate release potentially falls into the fourth, catch-all category of “other” extraordinary and compelling reasons, which specifically states that the Director of the BOP shall determine whether “there exists in the defendant’s case an extraordinary and compelling reason other than, or in combination with, the reasons described in subdivisions (A) through (C).” U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13 cmt. n.1(D). Although Subdivision D is reserved to the BOP Director, the Commission acknowledged, even before the passage of the First Step Act, that courts are in the position to determine whether extraordinary and compelling circumstances are present. *United States v. Beck*, 425 F. Supp. 3d 573, 583 (M.D.N.C. 2019) (“Read in light of the First Step Act, it is consistent with the previous policy statement and with the Commission guidance more generally for courts to exercise similar discretion as that previously reserved to the BOP Director in evaluating motions by defendants for compassionate release.”); *see Cantu*, 423 F. Supp. 3d at 352 (“[T]he correct interpretation of § 3582(c)(1)(A) . . . is that when a defendant brings a motion for a sentence reduction under the amended provision, the Court can determine whether any extraordinary and compelling reasons other than those delineated in U.S.S.G. § 1B1.13 cmt. n.1(A)-(C) warrant granting relief.”).

In the case at bar, there is no indication that the BOP Director made a determination regarding the presence of extraordinary and compelling reasons with respect to Scrivner for any “other” reason. In exercising its discretion, the court, likewise, finds that no extraordinary and compelling reasons exist in relation to Scrivner’s situation. Scrivner maintains that if he contracts COVID-19 it will be fatal for him due to prison overcrowding and there being no way to distance himself from other inmates. Scrivner voices concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 among

the prison population. Nevertheless, as of October 16, 2020, the figures available at [www.bop.gov](http://www.bop.gov) list 0 inmates (out of a total inmate population of 896) and 0 staff members at FCI Englewood as having confirmed positive cases of COVID-19, 7 inmates and 1 staff member who have recovered, and 0 inmates who have succumbed to the disease.

Although Scrivner expresses legitimate concerns regarding COVID-19, he does not establish that the BOP cannot manage the outbreak within his correctional facility or that the facility is specifically unable to treat Scrivner, if he were to contract the virus and develop COVID-19 symptoms, while incarcerated. *See Raia*, 954 F.3d at 597 (“[T]he mere existence of COVID-19 in society and the possibility that it may spread to a particular prison alone cannot independently justify compassionate release, especially considering BOP’s statutory role, and its extensive and professional efforts to curtail the virus’s spread.”); *United States v. Vasquez*, No. CR 2:18-1282-S-1, 2020 WL 3000709, at \*3 (S.D. Tex. June 2, 2020) (“General concerns about the spread of COVID-19 or the mere fear of contracting an illness in prison are insufficient grounds to establish the extraordinary and compelling reasons necessary to reduce a sentence.” (quoting *United States v. Koons*, No. 16-214-05, 2020 WL 1940570, at \*5 (W.D. La. Apr. 21, 2020))); *United States v. Clark*, 451 F. Supp. 3d 651, 656 (M.D. La. 2020) (finding the defendant had failed to present extraordinary and compelling reasons to modify his prison sentence because he “does not meet any of the criteria set forth by the statute” and he “cites no authority for the proposition that the fear of contracting a communicable disease warrants a sentence modification”). Furthermore, contracting the virus while incarcerated, even in conjunction with preexisting health conditions, is insufficient to establish exceptional and compelling circumstances warranting compassionate release. *See United States v. Jackson*, No. 3:16-CR-196-L-1, 2020 WL

4365633, at \*2 (N.D. Tex. July 30, 2020) (finding that defendant had failed to present extraordinary and compelling reasons for compassionate release despite suffering from previous underlying health conditions and testing positive for COVID-19). Here, Scrivner has failed to establish that a qualifying medical condition or other reasons exist that would constitute extraordinary and compelling reasons to reduce his sentence and release him from imprisonment.

The court further finds that compassionate release is not warranted in light of the applicable factors set forth in § 3553(a). *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) (requiring courts to consider the § 3553(a) factors before granting compassionate release); *Chambliss*, 948 F.3d at 693-94. Scrivner’s conviction stems from his commission of wire fraud for a period of almost 3 years in which he appropriated and embezzled the funds and property of Steel Fabrication Services (“SFS”) for his own use, without authority or permission. During this time, Scrivner, the general manager of SFS, defrauded both SFS and its president and chief executive officer by redirecting receivables and making unauthorized payments to himself and others for his benefit. Scrivner created a parallel business entity, SFSI, and represented to other businesses, banks, and individuals that SFSI and SFS were one and the same.

As the general manager of SFS, Scrivner changed network security protocols and physical security cameras and also prevented the president of SFS from accessing the books, records, and computers of SFS. Scrivner leased and improved property for the benefit of SFSI using funds belonging to SFS and sent emails relating to the leasing of the property for the benefit of SFSI. Scrivner also terminated an employee of SFS and hired his wife as the bookkeeper, which allowed him to conceal his nefarious activities more readily. Through the scheme as described by Probation, Scrivner embezzled, stole, deposited, transferred, defrauded, and spent funds belonging

to SFS to the detriment and loss of SFS. In total, Scrivner embezzled \$341,981.06 from SFS for his own benefit. Scrivner abused his position of trust with SFS, which ultimately led to SFS's demise. In essence, Scrivner hijacked the company and its assets from the rightful owner. In view of the nature and circumstances surrounding his offense of conviction, the court cannot conclude that he would not pose a danger to any other person or to the community, if released from imprisonment.

Moreover, the BOP has instituted a comprehensive management approach that includes screening, testing, appropriate treatment, prevention, education, and infection control measures in response to COVID-19. In response to a directive from the United States Attorney General in March 2020, the BOP immediately began reviewing all inmates who have COVID-19 risk factors, as described by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for the purpose of determining which inmates are suitable for placement on home confinement. *See United States v. Collins*, No. CR 04-50170-04, 2020 WL 1929844, at \*2 (W.D. La. Apr. 20, 2020). The BOP notes that inmates need not apply to be considered for home confinement, as this is being done automatically by case management staff. To date, the BOP has placed 7,837 inmates on home confinement. The March 2020 directive is limited to “eligible at-risk inmates who are non-violent and pose minimal likelihood of recidivism and who might be safer serving their sentences in home confinement rather than in BOP facilities.” *United States v. Castillo*, No. CR 2:13-852-1, 2020 WL 3000799, at \*3 (S.D. Tex. June 2, 2020). The BOP has the exclusive authority to determine where a prisoner is housed; thus, the court is without authority to order home confinement. 18 U.S.C. § 3621(b); *Ambriz v. United States*, No. 4:20-CV-568-P, 2020 WL 3066861, at \*2 (N.D. Tex. June 5, 2020); *United States v. Miller*, No. 2:17-CR-015-D (02), 2020 WL 2514887, at \*1

(N.D. Tex. May 15, 2020) (“[N]either the CARES Act nor the First Step Act authorizes the court to release an inmate to home confinement.”).

In his Memorandum to the BOP dated March 26, 2020, Attorney General Barr acknowledges that the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) has an obligation to protect both BOP personnel and inmates. He also notes that the DOJ has the responsibility of protecting the public, meaning that “we cannot take any risk of transferring inmates to home confinement that will contribute to the spread of COVID-19 or put the public at risk in other ways.” The Attorney General issued a subsequent Memorandum to the BOP on April 3, 2020, in which he emphasizes that police officers protecting the public face an increased risk from COVID-19 and cannot avoid exposure to the virus, with their numbers dwindling as officers who contract the virus become ill or die or need to recover or quarantine to avoid spreading the disease. Accordingly, he cautions:

The last thing our massively over-burdened police forces need right now is the indiscriminate release of thousands of prisoners onto the streets without any verification that those prisoners will follow the laws when they are released, that they have a safe place to go where they will not be mingling with their old criminal associates, and that they will not return to their old ways as soon as they walk through the prison gates.

As the court noted in *United States v. Preston*, “[t]he best predictor of how [Defendant] will behave if he were to be released is how he behaved in the past, and his track record is a poor one.” No. 3:18-CR-307-K, 2020 WL 1819888, at \*4 (N.D. Tex. Apr. 11, 2020) (quoting *United States v. Martin*, 447 F. Supp. 3d 399, 403 (D. Md. 2020)). Here, there is no reason for the court to believe that Scrivner would not revert to his opportunistic criminal conduct if released from prison.

In short, Scrivner has failed to satisfy his burden of showing the necessary circumstances to warrant relief under the statutory framework to which the court must adhere. *See United States*

*v. Dodge*, No. 17-323-01, 2020 WL 3668765, at \*5 (W.D. La. July 6, 2020) (stressing that “the rampant spread of the coronavirus and the conditions of confinement in jail, alone, are not sufficient grounds to justify a finding of extraordinary and compelling circumstances”); *Koops*, 2020 WL 1940570, at \*4-5 (same). As the court observed in *Koops*, rejecting the notion that it has “carte blanche” authority to release whomever it chooses, “[t]he Court cannot release every prisoner at risk of contracting COVID-19 because the Court would then be obligated to release every prisoner.” *Dodge*, 2020 WL 3668765, at \*6; *Koops*, 2020 WL 1940570, at \*5.

IV. Conclusion

Consistent with the foregoing analysis, Scrivner’s Motion for Compassionate Release (#66) is DENIED.

SIGNED at Beaumont, Texas, this 19th day of October, 2020.

  
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MARCIA A. CRONE  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE